
Government of the District of Columbia



**Office of the Deputy Mayor for
Public Safety and Justice**

Testimony of
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***“Public Oversight Hearing on Police Service Area
Boundaries and Bill 16-241, the District of Columbia
Community Protection Act of 2005”***

Committee on the Judiciary
Phil Mendelson, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
11:00 A.M.

Good afternoon Chairperson Mendelson and members of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Edward Reiskin, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. It is my pleasure to testify before you today on the deployment of officers from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) throughout the city's neighborhoods in the District's Police Service Areas (PSAs). Today's hearing is a welcome opportunity to continue our dialogue with the Council and members of the public on strategies for making our neighborhoods safer. One of the city's most important public safety strategies is *Policing for Prevention*, of which robust PSA deployment is an essential ingredient. My comments will also address Bill 16-241, the "District of Columbia Community Protection Act of 2005," a bill that, among other provisions, would require the MPD to hire an additional 1,600 officers to be distributed equally among wards, primarily for foot and bike patrols.

It is the shared belief of the Mayor, the City Administrator, and mine that community policing is a vital element of the District's overall crime reduction and prevention strategy. Put simply, the police cannot be effective if its officers don't engage the people who live and work in the communities they serve. And Chief Ramsey's commitment to preventing crime and the fear of crime through community partnerships is longstanding. That is why the Chief revised the 1997 PSA model as part of the MPD's *Policing for Prevention* strategy in 1999, combining focused law enforcement and neighborhood partnerships to find sustainable solutions to crime problems. *Policing for Prevention* recognizes that officers and officials who are closest to the community—the Police Districts and PSAs—work best with the community.

We also recognize that most people don't want a cop on every corner; they want the crime eliminated. Because a public safety strategy solely based on more cops is ultimately not sustainable, the District's community-policing strategy focuses instead on systemic change; change that addresses the underlying causes of crime. And, as you know, this focus has produced unprecedented reductions in crime across the District in nearly every neighborhood—such as a nearly 18 percent reduction in crime in calendar year 2004, which followed a nearly 9 percent drop in crime the year before. But the most noteworthy aspect of this trend is that the benefits were shared by residents across the city—there were reductions in every major crime category and in each of the seven police districts in 2004.¹ And the trend is continuing in 2005. Serious crime is down 9% through September 2005 over the same period in 2004.²

Another important indicator of this systemic change is the reduction in homicides. Homicides fell by more than 20 percent from 2003 to 2004. Last year, the District ended the year with fewer than 200 homicides for the first time since 1986. As of September, the number of homicides continues to fall, and is almost 5% lower than this time last year. And while we will never rest until every child in DC is safe from crime, we are hopeful that the current decrease in juvenile homicides—8 in 2005 compared to 21 over the same period last year—will continue.

Yet despite our progress, there is always room for improvement. Over the past seven years,

¹ Testimony of the Chief of Police before the DC Council Committee on the Judiciary on Metropolitan Police Department Performance in FY2004, March 10, 2005

² [Preliminary](#) DC Code Index Crime data, as of September 30, 2005, Metropolitan Police Department

Chief Ramsey has led the MPD in a continuous cycle of working with the community to develop, evaluate and improve upon the existing community-policing strategy. As you will hear from the Chief, the MPD implemented a reorganization of the PSAs in 2004 that incorporated extensive community feedback. The reorganization, combined with comprehensive analyses of PSA efficacy and officer deployment in 2001, 2003, and, most recently, in April 2005, represents four major evaluations of the PSA model in just seven years. The requirement in Bill 16-241 for “the MPD [to] conduct a study to determine the most appropriate assignment of officers” in the communities could not add anything substantive to the body of work that has already been completed.³

Each comprehensive evaluation was based on crime data, calls for service, community interaction, best practices from other jurisdictions, and respected criminal justice research on policing models to determine the appropriate deployment levels. Alternatively, Bill 16-241, as it is proposed, would add 1,600 new officers to the ranks assigned equally to each of 8 wards for community policing. Our *Policing for Prevention* strategy represents a fundamentally different approach to deployment than Bill 16-241, which bases deployment decisions on political boundaries without regard to crime data, calls for service, or even community opinion. We believe that these inputs are necessary for any PSA deployment model to be successful. Moreover, police deployment decisions codified through legislation unduly restrict the Chief’s flexibility in responding quickly to changes in the inputs that should dictate deployment patterns.

While the full costs of this bill haven’t been determined, it is clear that the magnitude would be extraordinary. If 1,600 officers were added to the Department today, **the salaries alone**, excluding benefits, retirement, and overtime, would be almost \$100 million a year. This does not include the additional costs to recruit, hire, and train the officers, or the critical costs to support them—such as uniforms, vehicles, equipment, computers, and facilities. A funding decision on this order should be made within the context of the entire budget so that it may be considered together with the District’s other public safety and overall priorities. We believe that spending over \$100 million for more officers would divert scarce resources from these priorities.

We also believe that DC already has a lot of police officers, even accounting for the federal presence and the functions performed by the District that are normally handled by states. And given the size of DC, we should never hear that people don’t see officers in their neighborhood. To the extent that residents hold that perception, we need to address it. We worked hard to reach our authorized strength of 3,800 sworn members and we continue to assign all new graduate recruits to the PSAs. We are also increasing the number of officers in our neighborhoods by moving officers out of administrative positions via civilianization and reducing the number of members unavailable for full duty through enhanced risk management and back-to-work policies and programs, which you will hear from the Chief in greater detail in a moment.

While the number of officers assigned to PSAs for community patrol—including foot and bike patrols—is important, it is also important to note that the total number of officers in neighborhoods includes officers from a number of specialized units within the MPD. The MPD

³ Bill 16-241, §4 (2)

constantly performs a balancing act to ensure all vital areas of the department are appropriately resourced. For example, officers in non-PSA units that work regularly in the neighborhoods include those assigned to School Security, the Canine Unit, and Focused Mission Teams to name just a few.

I also want to address the misperception reinforced by Bill 16-241 that officers assigned to PSAs are pulled out of the community for downtown security during mass demonstrations and other large public events. Yes, the MPD must balance the security needs of the entire city during special events that require greater security. But the MPD has many of resources at its disposal and is capable of protecting our neighborhoods and the downtown sector during mass demonstrations, emergencies, and other situations. To use the last Presidential Inaugural as an example, the MPD supervised an additional force of officers from surrounding jurisdictions to provide security without removing officers from District neighborhoods. And to further protect our neighborhoods in times of heightened national alert, the Executive is proposing additional language to the Homeland Security Risk Reduction and Preparedness Act of 2005 to grant the Mayor or his designee the authority to temporarily swear in special police officers during emergency declarations.

Ultimately, with an adequate level of resources—which I believe we have—we must ensure community policing is working across the District in every neighborhood. Through the *Policing for Prevention* strategy and the PSA deployment model that supports it, the MPD has good plans and sound policies that maximize community feedback. Our challenge is to ensure consistent implementation. We need to keep dedicated community members engaged, and have to provide them with the incentive of tangible public safety benefits for the investment of their time.

In closing, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you on the important topic of community policing in the District of Columbia. I welcome your specific feedback on how to improve community engagement or any other aspect of the strategy for making our neighborhoods safer. I am available for any questions that you may have.